

I recently contacted Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki about the ongoing poor service at the Oakland Regional Office. I received his [response](#) this week and wanted to share it with you. Secretary Shinseki indicated that they have added more staff to disability claims review and as a result the Oakland office this year has more than doubled its monthly production of completed appeals cases. The Secretary also indicated that the Veterans Benefits Administration is working to standardize and improve the appeals process.

As you may remember from my [previous e-mail](#) , many Northern California veterans are facing lengthy processing delays for Notices of Disagreement (NOD) at the Oakland Regional Office. I understand that issuing a determination for initial claims from veterans can also take years and that even expedited cases involving veterans who are homeless or terminally ill take an average of 8 months. This is completely unacceptable and is why I have demanded answers and accountability from Secretary Shinseki. The Secretary initially [indicated](#) that the Department was aggressively working to increase staffing at the Oakland office, but months later the problems remained.

I am encouraged by the Secretary's most recent correspondence, and I realize that many of these changes will not be immediately felt. Please know that I will continue to closely monitor this situation to ensure that the Oakland office processes claims from Northern California veterans in a timely manner, and I will continue to be a stalwart supporter of our veterans and their families.